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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 99: TRAINING AND RESEARCH

(a) UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/51/3, parts I, II and III, A/51/135-E/1996/51, A/51/379, A/51/534 and A/C.2/51/L.2)

1. Mr. ACUÑA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that he looked forward to the prompt completion of the reviews of the mandates of the Council's functional commissions, expert groups, bodies and regional commissions. As the Group had consistently pointed out, unless new and additional resources were made available to sustain and support the reform exercise in the long run, reform would be reduced to a simple cost-cutting exercise. Accordingly it welcomed the selection of the theme "Enabling environment for development" for the high-level segment of the Council's 1997 session, and the theme "Funding for operational activities" for the operational activities segment.

2. The Group viewed as a major accomplishment of the current year's substantive session the steps taken to strengthen collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions and welcomed, in particular, the holding of Council meetings involving the participation of trade and finance ministers as well as heads of financial and trade institutions. It noted with satisfaction the adoption of a resolution on operational activities for development and welcomed the agreed conclusions. The Council's review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations was the most important achievement of the general segment of the 1996 substantive session.

3. The Group had noted with concern that few of the executive heads of specialized agencies including those of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization had attended the high-level segment. Without their presence the Council could not be a forum for high-level debate on important international economic and social issues.

4. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) noted that while the Council's shorter sessions would undoubtedly produce savings, he was concerned that there would not be enough time to discuss issues properly. He was also concerned that none of the agreed agenda items should be dropped. It had been clear that the Council had not had time to discuss the reports of its subsidiary bodies, some of which related to issues of vital importance to Member States. The object of the reforms being implemented should not diminish the transparency of discussions.

5. The high-level discussion on global economic conditions had been useful. His delegation supported its continuation and hoped that the executive heads of the specialized agencies, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions, would participate.

6. His delegation supported the practice of choosing a topic for discussion at the high-level segment since it enabled the Council to exchange views on matters of global importance.

7. He was hopeful that suggestions would be made regarding how to obtain new and additional resources for operational activities for development; naturally

such resources should not replace the official development assistance. One possibility, as his delegation had already suggested, would be to collect fees when patents were registered, since global economic development was directly linked to modern technology. His delegation was also interested in the Council's decision regarding information systems which would permit increased communication between United Nations missions and offices and between the Organization and capitals, since that would speed communications and make financial savings.

8. Mr. DASHUTSIN (Belarus) said that General Assembly resolution 50/227 provided a basis for further reform in the socio-economic sector. In the view of Belarus, the restructuring of the Economic and Social Council should be aimed at strengthening its coordinating role for the implementation of the programmes of action resulting from the recent series of global conferences. To that end, cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions must be strengthened and financial resources increasingly directed towards promoting development. Therefore, his delegation welcomed the provision in resolution 50/227 calling for periodic special meetings between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions. The Council should continue to promote unconditional and universal programme activities taking into account the needs of all groups of countries, including the countries with economies in transition.

9. In conclusion, the organization of work for the substantive sessions of the Council must be further streamlined, particularly in the light of the decision in resolution 50/227 to reduce future Council sessions to four weeks beginning in 1997. The decisions taken at the forthcoming resumed substantive session would be of great importance to the future work of the Council.

10. Ms. HOMANOVS'KA (Ukraine) said that her delegation believed that the format of discussions at the sessions of the Economic and Social Council should be changed. Instead of long reports, there should be lively discussions. In order to derive maximum benefit from the Council's deliberations it was essential that senior officials representing Governments and international financial and trade organizations should participate in the high-level segment. Consultations with the Council members on all issues of interest should become routine in order to streamline the Council's deliberations. Her delegation was concerned about the insufficient attention devoted to the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. In that regard, she recalled the importance given to inter-agency coordination by General Assembly resolution 50/227. Her delegation was also seriously concerned about the late issuance of documentation for the session. The Committee should continue to focus on the question of reform of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

11. Mr. KAID (Yemen) joined the delegations of Egypt, Palestine and Tunisia in thanking the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the report contained in document A/51/135, although the report had not given sufficient coverage to the Syrian Golan.

12. As had been recognized in numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions the establishment of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and other occupied Arab territory had no legal validity. Yet since the new

Government had taken over Israel continued to build and expand settlements, open new roads, harass the Palestinian and Syrian people on their own territory and appropriate resources. It was therefore clear that the Israelis had no serious interest in pursuing the peace process. Israel must be prevailed upon to proceed with the peace process and to admit the prior legal claim of the Palestinian and Syrian people to sovereignty over their resources. He requested the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to implement existing resolutions.

13. Mr. AALA (Syrian Arab Republic) said that despite the international community's repeated assertions concerning the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural and economic resources, Israel continued to disregard the resolutions of the Security Council and, since the inauguration of the new Government, it had accelerated its settlement policy expropriating still more Arab land and expelling the inhabitants, in order to make way for settlers who had absolutely no connection with that land. As recently as September 1996, the Israeli Government had announced an increase in the number of settlements in the Golan, thereby negating the principle of land for peace.

14. The report contained in document A/51/135 gave many examples of Israeli policies which contravened legitimate international resolutions. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the Government was offering financial incentives to encourage settlers to make their homes there, and was continuously expanding those settlements. There were now some 40 Israeli settlements built over the ruins of 244 villages which had been destroyed in 1967. The 200,000 original Syrian inhabitants had been expelled and replaced by settlers from all over the world. Syrian citizens who remained under occupation suffered from a variety of tyrannical practices, such as the expropriation of their agricultural land and water resources, stringent controls on the marketing and export of their produce and the imposition of crippling taxes on it; in addition they were deprived of the most basic health care. Israel's practice of disposing of industrial waste in the occupied territories and uprooting productive trees were harmful to the environment. The occupation authorities continued their policies with a view to the Judaization of the occupied Golan and the eradication of its Syrian Arab characteristics by seizing antiquities and despoiling the historical Arab culture. The Arab educational system had been replaced by instruction in Hebrew, there were no higher education opportunities for Syrian youth in the Golan, and Israeli nationality and personal identification cards were obligatory. All those practices constituted a blatant violation of United Nations resolutions and the precepts of international law.

15. It was imperative that the international community should bring pressure to bear on the Israeli Government and compel it to respect and implement relevant United Nations resolutions demanding Israel's withdrawal from Arab land occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem as well as from the occupied Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon.

16. Mr. STOBY (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD)) said that 1997 would be a very important year for the Council as it attempted to implement the provisions of resolution 50/227 in full and began to undertake the review and reform process mandated by that

resolution. Moreover, the Secretary-General would be submitting, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, his report to the General Assembly on the joint review of the relationship between the United Nations and those institutions. In that connection, it would be interesting for Member States to focus on ensuring greater involvement of the United Nations bodies and institutions based in New York in the work of the Bretton Woods institutions in Washington. Finally, 1997 would be the year when the high-level segment addressed the issue of fostering an enabling environment, with its subthemes of financial flows and trade and investment.

AGENDA ITEM 99: TRAINING AND RESEARCH

(a) UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (A/51/14 (Part I), A/51/554, A/51/642 and Add.1)

17. Mr. HALLIDAY (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/554), said that the Secretary-General believed that training programmes designed for Member State requirements and those intended for United Nations staff members represented a valuable investment in the Organization's future. The existence of commonalities underlined the importance of programme collaboration between the United Nations Staff College Project and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

18. Reviewing the evolution of the Staff College Project, he noted that the Secretary-General's strategy for managing the Organization's human resources had envisaged cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations system, Member States and others, and entrusting the International Labour Organization's International Training Centre in Turin with the management of the project. Considerable progress had been made over the previous 18 months. A shared United Nations vision, approach and management philosophy could be developed on the basis of shared experiences and lessons learned. In that connection, should the General Assembly wish to receive a comprehensive study of the training institutions and activities within the United Nations, the Secretary-General would cooperate fully with the Joint Inspection Unit. However, since such a study could prove to be a costly undertaking, the Secretary-General hoped it would build on the considerable research work already undertaken.

19. The Staff College, which was being implemented as a project of the Secretariat, was currently funded completely from extrabudgetary resources and was designed to become self-financing over time. It would build on existing system-wide networks linking learning programmes and institutions throughout the world. Moreover, it had been developed with inputs from United Nations system organizations, Member States and academics.

20. The Secretary-General believed that UNITAR and the Staff College would both benefit from mutual association. Curricula in areas and disciplines of shared interest could be developed and such association would not only enhance the cost effectiveness of programme development and delivery, but would also avoid donor fatigue. Moreover, joint training and learning opportunities for government representatives and United Nations staff would help to build operational partnerships for more effective action in areas of shared concern and activity.

The Secretary-General had actively pursued, over the previous year, all possible avenues for increased UNITAR-United Nations Staff College cooperation which, he believed, could yield substantive benefits. One possible aspect of such cooperation would be the relocation of UNITAR to the International Training Centre in Turin. However, further study was required thereon. Priority areas for cooperation between the two institutions would include peacekeeping and peacemaking, the provision of humanitarian assistance and management of complex emergencies. The Secretary-General welcomed the recognition by the UNITAR Board of Trustees of the importance of that initiative and its instruction to the Acting Executive Director to strengthen cooperation with the Turin Centre and with the Staff College Project. Such cooperation had taken the form of UNITAR involvement in United Nations Staff College curriculum development workshops as well as the joint development of a United Nations Staff College module for United Nations field operations in conflict prevention and resolution.

21. Mr. BOISARD (Acting Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)) said that although the status of UNITAR remained fragile, the goals set by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session had been achieved. The Institute's two greatest assets during the transition period had been its youthful, motivated and energetic staff and its Board of Trustees. With their help and input, UNITAR was recovering the spirit of its original mandate and becoming a training institute in the service of Member States.

22. A full report of UNITAR activities from 1 July 1994 to 30 June 1996 would be available before the end of the fifty-first session. For the future, it intended to maintain about 70 different training programmes serving around 4,000 people per year. UNITAR was continuing its training programmes in international affairs and economic and social development in Geneva, Vienna and New York. Its fellowship programme in international law and preventive diplomacy had attracted 200 applications for fewer than 20 available places.

23. UNITAR had ceased all research of a purely academic nature, although some more general research was continuing. In contrast, research for training purposes and the volume of publications and training materials resulting therefrom had increased. The Institute was also continuing to develop its relationships with the specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

24. He had undertaken to avoid any financial deficit in operating UNITAR, and that goal had been achieved. In order to meet the growing number of requests for training from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, UNITAR would however, need to double its financial resources. He appealed to States to resume or increase their voluntary contributions to the General Fund.

25. Mr. OTHMAN (Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)), reporting on the results of the feasibility study on the relocation of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to the Turin Centre (contained in document A/51/642 and Add.1) which the Joint Inspection Unit had undertaken at the request of the Board of Trustees, said that the purpose of the study had been twofold: to highlight the potential advantages and disadvantages of maintaining UNITAR in Geneva or relocating it to Turin, and to assess whether relocation would be compatible with the objectives of rationalizing the work of the United Nations system.

26. At the conclusion of the two-month feasibility study, the Joint Inspection Unit had reached several conclusions. First, there was consensus on the need to find ways to coordinate United Nations system training activities in order to use resources more rationally, avoid duplication and consolidate activities as far as possible. Secondly, since the United Nations Staff College Project was a new venture and the exact nature of its contribution and its relationship to other training elements would emerge only with experience, UNITAR should, for the time being, continue to strengthen its cooperation with the Staff College Project through practical measures to allow the latter to take advantage of the Institute's long experience and expertise in training. Finally, and most importantly, the General Assembly might wish to request a comprehensive study of the training institutions and activities within the United Nations system that would propose practical measures for their coordination.

27. Mr. GRANT (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union regretted that the report of the Secretary-General on the activities and the role of UNITAR, as requested in resolution 50/121, had not been available in time to allow the item to be debated as scheduled and that the report of the Acting Executive Director had not been available in final form. While noting the reasons given by letter for the lengthy report, it expected that a more concise report would be the norm in the future.

28. The European Union reiterated its support for the valuable role of UNITAR and was encouraged at the continued progress in its restructuring. It welcomed in particular its continued sound administrative and financial management. It agreed with the Acting Executive Director that the activities of the Institute should be more closely aligned with the priorities of the United Nations system as a whole and that cooperation and collaboration with the Staff College Project in particular should be strengthened. It also stressed the importance of a cooperative relationship between the Secretariat and the Institute.

29. The members of the European Union, as major contributors to the General Fund, believed that, in order to make the most efficient use of its limited resources, UNITAR must concentrate its activities in those fields relevant to its mandate and in areas with the most vital need where the best results were possible. Finally, the Institute could benefit from the definitive appointment by the Secretary-General of an Executive Director.

30. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan), speaking both as the representative of Pakistan and as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of UNITAR, said that the Institute, once the object of much ridicule, had become one of the best managed components of the United Nations system. However, the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/554) hardly did justice to the Institute, for it devoted most of its attention to the United Nations system-wide Staff College project. That was surprising, since UNITAR was an established Institute set up by the General Assembly, with a track record which was open to examination whereas the Staff College project was a programme of the Secretariat and stood largely untested thus far. Although there was some justification for collaboration between the two, the success of such collaboration would depend on the ability of the Staff College to establish itself as a viable institution and a partner worthy of greater responsibilities.

31. He was surprised that the report contained no reference to the report of the Board of Trustees, a copy of which had been sent to the Secretary-General, under his signature, in the hope that it would be made available to delegations before the debate. As the report had not been circulated, for reasons which he did not understand, he would summarize some of its salient points.

32. First, the Board had commended the Institute and its staff for the quality and range of the training programmes undertaken and had made recommendations for the further enhancement of their design and delivery. Secondly, the Board had approved the Institute's current policy of providing materials free of charge, as far as possible, to developing countries and at a price to industrialized countries, and had requested that adequate resources be sought to maintain their production and dissemination.

33. Thirdly, the Board had urged UNITAR to carefully follow the priorities of the international agenda, use available talents in the academic community to design appropriate curricula and, in certain areas, such as international affairs management, ensure that a modular approach allowed for extensive coverage of all the main aspects of the issue. Fourthly, in view of the fact that the decentralized approach had proved most effective, the Board had encouraged the Executive Director to continue developing training programmes by relying on existing national and regional training institutions, particularly in the developing countries.

34. Fifthly, after considering the progress report on the development of new programmes, the Board had emphasized the need to be responsive to emerging areas of training while keeping in mind the resource constraints of the Institute. Lastly, the Board had concluded that the Institute's financial situation although fragile, was healthy, and had decided to pursue informal consultations on ways to enhance the financial base through the more direct involvement of the Trustees.

35. He was surprised that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, which provided a thorough historical perspective and an impartial overview of the situation, had been circulated only that day, although it had been made available to the Trustees earlier. Its delayed circulation made a meaningful and objective debate impossible.

36. In conclusion, he underscored the importance which the developing countries attached to UNITAR, noted the high degree of interest in its work as evinced by the diplomatic and academic communities at the opening of the New York Liaison Office and wished UNITAR success in its future endeavours.

37. Ms. CUI Ying (China) said that the readjustment and consolidation of UNITAR had given it new vitality. Her delegation hoped that the opening of the Liaison Office in New York would lead to greater cooperation and coordination between UNITAR and other relevant institutes and the further enhancement of the quality of projects and, in particular, that it would enable UNITAR to meet the training needs of diplomatic personnel at Headquarters. The Institute had successfully adapted its projects to changing needs and, in addition to having successfully implemented projects on multilateral diplomacy, had also strengthened projects concerning international economic development, for which it should be commended.

Now that the outcomes of the major recent international conferences had entered the implementation stage, UNITAR should develop more focused training projects reflecting those outcomes.

38. A scarcity of funds remained an urgent problem for UNITAR. Her delegation therefore urged the international community, and the developed countries in particular, to respond positively to the relevant United Nations resolutions by providing UNITAR with additional financial resources, in particular, resources not tied to special purpose grants. The Chinese Government had always attached importance to the role of the Institute and would continue to support its work.

39. Mr. BETI (Observer for Switzerland) said that the resolution of the major problems confronting the international community required close and effective international cooperation and that government representatives responsible for multilateral diplomacy and negotiations must have adequate training in order to be true partners in that cooperative effort. Paradoxically, UNITAR, the agency responsible for providing such training, was a small institution, was not very well-known, and had an extremely modest budget. Nevertheless, it had become an effective and flexible institution providing a targeted response to its clients' needs and was a model of financial health. In the light of UNITAR's crucial role and the progress it had made, the Acting Executive Director should be confirmed in his post.

40. In order to enable UNITAR to serve more countries and meet increasing demands for its services, the General Assembly should invite States to provide the voluntary contributions which would be needed to achieve those goals. The Institute should also consider selling its training services to the industrialized countries, while continuing to provide them at no cost to the developing countries. The United Nations system should publicize UNITAR's work more broadly among Member States, for example, by inviting UNITAR to describe its sustainable development training activities at the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

41. Switzerland would continue to make every effort, in particular, by providing substantial financial support, to enable UNITAR to develop its activities in as positive an environment as possible.

42. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) said that, although he would not comment further on it, he found paragraph 62 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/51/642), very alarming.

43. Lebanon welcomed the fact that UNITAR raised its own funds either through voluntary contributions or through special purpose grants, and felt that it should remain a small, multilateral and multidisciplinary body with autonomy, flexibility and efficiency in fulfilling precise and focused training missions. Its activities in peaceful settlement of disputes and international law, in addition to economic and social development, were very useful. His delegation urged UNITAR to maintain its focus on development concerns. While agreeing on the need for a cost-effective approach to its publications, he believed that they should be made available on a concessional basis to libraries, universities and Ministries for Foreign Affairs in developing countries.

44. Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) said that the success of the Committee's work required that its deliberations take the form of a dialogue, which would impart greater energy to the discussions.

45. Like the representative of Pakistan his delegation was concerned that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/51/642) had been submitted to delegations only at the last minute and that the full report of the Board of Trustees had not been provided at all. He paid tribute to the Acting Executive Director for his successful efforts to reform the Institute.

46. The suggestion that UNITAR should be relocated to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Training Centre in Turin was, in his view, somewhat premature. The Institute had only recently been restructured - thus far with positive results - and it must be given time to continue to prove the effectiveness and efficiency of the reforms. To repeatedly introduce reforms without allowing adequate time for them to bear fruit would only result in inefficiency.

47. Mr. KOBAYASHI (Japan) said that his delegation was deeply grateful to the Acting Executive Director of UNITAR for his dedication to the work of the Institute. His Government, the largest donor to UNITAR, had the highest regard for its training activities, particularly those relating to development.

48. The success of the relevant bodies of the United Nations system in implementing the resolutions and initiatives adopted at United Nations conferences depended on building the capacity of the officials and staff of Member States to become directly involved in the implementation process. Training programmes in development and in international affairs management should continue to be promoted, and his Government hoped that the Institute would further develop and implement programmes responding to the needs and expectations of the United Nations and its Member States. His delegation hoped that the New York Liaison Office would play a pivotal role in ensuring that UNITAR accomplished that goal.

49. His delegation was disappointed with the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/51/554 which, instead of focusing on possible ways to strengthen the training activities of UNITAR and to better define its role, as requested in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 50/121, focused instead on the concept of a United Nations Staff College, which was developed at length. His delegation was unable to take note of the report and hoped that in the future the Secretary-General would respond more faithfully and in a more balanced manner to the concerns of the General Assembly. He also endorsed the remarks by the representative of Pakistan concerning the delay in the distribution of document A/51/642 and Add.1.

50. Important issues such as the location of the headquarters, functions and activities of UNITAR should be duly considered and decided upon by the General Assembly, as had been the case for the transfer of UNITAR's headquarters to Geneva. The same procedure should be followed in respect of the United Nations Staff College.

51. The financial situation of Japan remained very difficult and its budget for fiscal year 1997 would have to reflect that fact. Accordingly, his delegation hoped that UNITAR would make further efforts to ensure the best use of the contributions it received and improve the effectiveness of its activities in order to attract further contributions from Member States.

52. Mr. OJIMBA (Nigeria) said that his delegation noted with dismay and disappointment the Secretariat's delay in distributing the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/554) as well as that of the Institute's Acting Executive Director (A/51/14 (Part I)).

53. His delegation was encouraged by the training activities and programmes UNITAR had been able to undertake in the past year, and welcomed the recent opening of the UNITAR liaison office in New York. The Institute's presence in New York would undoubtedly meet the needs and request for personnel training from permanent missions in New York, particularly those of the developing countries.

54. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly in its resolution 50/121 had reaffirmed the relevance of UNITAR, particularly in view of the many training requirements of all Member States. In the same resolution, the Assembly invited the Institute to further its cooperation with United Nations institutes and other relevant national, regional and international institutes.

55. It was difficult to understand why the Secretary-General's report was devoted entirely to the United Nations Staff College Project; the emphasis on that project was clearly a misinterpretation of General Assembly resolution 50/121 and represented another effort to diminish the Institute's activities and programmes. UNITAR should not be submerged within any other United Nations agency, and any attempt to do so would be an exercise in futility.

56. His delegation commended the restructuring process that UNITAR had undertaken and believed that the Institute should be encouraged to continue its efforts to achieve solvency and pursue its goals. In that regard, UNITAR required additional financial resources, and his delegation called on Member States, in particular the developed countries, to contribute generously to the Institute's General Fund. Before the end of 1996, Nigeria would make its regular contribution to the Institute through an established permanent endowment for UNITAR.

57. Mr. RUDENSKIY (Russian Federation) said that there had been many improvements in UNITAR operations since its transfer to Geneva, largely because of the strict financial and organizational management of the acting Executive Director. The opening of the New York liaison office would facilitate its work with the permanent missions, especially by using the potential of the Internet and the United Nations "home page" to lower printing costs and improve the dissemination of information. Computer technology could also be used to hold training courses and disseminate teaching materials by electronic means. Video conferencing, which was already in use in the United Nations system, would also cut costs and increase effectiveness.

58. The programme of regional seminars, such as the seminar on external debt recently held in Moscow, should continue. The Russian Federation was interested in establishing more effective cooperation between UNITAR and its institutions of higher learning through staff training and cooperation with research institutes dealing with sustainable development issues. Another area for further cooperation would be the establishment of a centre on environmentally sound technologies.

59. It was important to harmonize all training within the United Nations system as a whole. The Acting Executive Director could be entrusted with the task of investigating that area, and could report to the General Assembly at the fifty-second session. The Russian Federation reiterated its view that the status of the Acting Executive Director should be clarified. It also favoured maintaining UNITAR in Geneva, but developing closer cooperation with the Turin Centre.

60. Mr. ALIOU (Cameroon) commended the Acting Executive Director of UNITAR for his tireless efforts to ensure the success of the restructuring of the Institute. The New York liaison office should be provided with adequate financial, material and human resources support to enable it to meet the many requests for assistance it received from permanent missions in New York. UNITAR's headquarters had been moved to Geneva because of that city's strategic location. The Institute should be allowed sufficient time to establish itself in Geneva, after which its Board of Trustees could determine whether a further move was desirable.

61. UNITAR was now on a sound financial footing, and its efforts to consolidate its financial health should be encouraged and strengthened. Accordingly, potential contributors who had been holding back while awaiting the results of the restructuring exercise should now resume making contributions to the General Fund.

62. His delegation commended UNITAR for focusing its activities on training in international affairs management and in economic and social development.

63. The Acting Executive Director should be confirmed in his post, a step which would strengthen both the post itself and the Institute. In conclusion, he said that Cameroon was proud to be a member of the Board of Trustees and to have had one of its nationals serve as Executive Director of UNITAR, and it welcomed the fruitful cooperation between UNITAR and the Cameroonian Institute for Foreign Affairs.

64. Mr. HALLIDAY (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) said that he hoped that the representative of Pakistan saw the advantage to UNITAR, the Staff College, Member States and their staff, of collaboration between the Institute and the Staff College, notwithstanding the fact that the Staff College was still in the development stage. The Secretary-General believed that it had great potential, and it was to be hoped that, given the support for the concept already demonstrated by Member States, many agencies, the United Nations University and UNITAR itself, that potential would be realized. The support of the representative of Pakistan, who was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, for the initiative was important.

65. He was concerned that a number of delegations believed that the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/554) failed to respond adequately to the provisions of the relevant General Assembly resolution. The approach taken in the report, although a positive one, had perhaps been overly narrow, in focusing mainly on the Staff College. The other matters which were to have been addressed had been dealt with in considerable detail in the report of the Acting Executive Director. Moreover, as the representative of Pakistan had indicated, UNITAR was a somewhat autonomous institution and, accordingly, its activities and the guidance it required were generated by Member States very effectively through the Board of Trustees.

66. The Secretary-General was well aware of the concern expressed by the representative of Switzerland, regarding the issue of the post of Executive Director. In April 1996, the Office of Human Resources Management had reviewed the job description for the post in conformity with the provisions of the standards of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and had informed the Acting Executive Director and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees that it believed that the functions included in that job description conformed to the standards of ICSC and were classifiable at the D-2 level. The results of that review had been known for several months.

67. In fact, under normal circumstances, the classification of a UNITAR post would be made by the Executive Director; however, since in the current instance the decision affected the Acting Executive Director, the Office had assumed, perhaps wrongly, that the Board of Trustees would want to take a decision and advise the Secretariat accordingly so that action could be taken on the post. Once that administrative issue had been dealt with, there would be no difficulty in moving ahead.

68. The representative of Japan had referred to the General Assembly in relation to UNITAR. In 1994, the Staff College concept had been presented to the Assembly which, in its resolution 49/222, had endorsed that concept. Since that time, much work had been done with Member States and agencies of the United Nations system. At the current session of the Assembly, the Office of Human Resources Management had again reported on progress made, and it hoped the Assembly would endorse that progress.

69. Responding to the representative of Nigeria, he said that the development of the Staff College concept would in no way diminish the Institute's activities and programmes. The investments being made in the Staff College would in fact enhance UNITAR activities and provide new opportunities in the area of training for staff members, non-governmental organizations and Member States. Further, there had been no intention to "submerge" the Institute. UNITAR would retain its independence but would be associated physically and collaboratively with the work of the Turin Centre, where the Staff College was situated.

70. He regretted that some delegations had expressed dissatisfaction with the emphasis that had been placed on the future collaborative role of UNITAR. In their draft resolution, Member States should focus on collaboration between the Institute and the Staff College, both of which were supported by Member States. The JIU report (JIU/REP/96/2) gave a very fair appraisal of the benefits of relocating UNITAR to the Turin Centre, and he welcomed the fact that a number of

delegations had agreed that further consideration should be given to that proposal.

71. Mr. BOISARD (Acting Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research) said that UNITAR would take account of the comments that had been made at the current meeting. UNITAR was open to cooperation with United Nations institutions and institutions of Member States. The Institute was seeking to collaborate with other organizations, and had submitted a common training programme to the Turin Centre.

72. UNITAR had raised certain expectations among Member States, particularly the developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The Institute would endeavour, within available means, to meet those requests while remaining within the framework established by its Board of Trustees.

73. Mr. AL-HARTHY (Oman) requested information about the Institute's plans to prepare a training programme to assist developing countries in implementing Agenda 21.

74. Mr. BOISARD (Acting Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research) said that UNITAR had a large number of programmes in the area of Agenda 21. For example, it had a training programme dealing with the implementation of the London Guidelines for the Exchange of Information on Chemicals in International Trade, which involved the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Another UNITAR programme, funded by the Global Environment Facility through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), provided training in implementing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNITAR training programmes assisted developing countries in preparing and implementing national strategies to give effect to the Framework Convention. The Institute had held three pilot training courses in Mexico, Zimbabwe and the Czech Republic and was currently beginning training programmes in five Latin American countries, four French-speaking African countries and approximately 20 countries of the Pacific region.

75. UNITAR had signed a cooperation agreement with the provisional secretariat for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The Institute provided assistance in disseminating information on desertification and had devised a computerized programme to monitor the implementation of the Convention. In the area of computer technology, the Institute had launched a whole series of new programmes to monitor developments in climate change. UNITAR had signed a cooperation agreement with the secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. Moreover, a training programme would probably soon be held in the newly independent countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Finally, the Institute had just inaugurated a distance-learning programme dealing with environmental law.

76. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that his delegation, as well as many other delegations, did not understand the Secretary-General's and Assistant Secretary-

General's focus on the question of collaboration between UNITAR and the Turin Centre. It was not for the Secretariat to determine whether there should be collaboration between UNITAR and the Centre. Only the General Assembly, which had moved the Institute from New York to Geneva, could decide on that matter.

77. Although UNITAR had been headed by an Under-Secretary-General for years, the Secretariat had suddenly decided that that post should be downgraded to the D-2 level. In that regard, he wished to know who was responsible for that decision, the Institute's Board of Trustees or the Secretariat?

78. Many delegations, including his own, had asked why the Secretary-General's report on the Institute (A/51/554) was a document of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. His delegation was not used to discussing fiftieth session documents at the fifty-first session. Moreover, the JIU report had been distributed to delegations at the current meeting in a surreptitious and underhanded manner despite the fact that it had been available to the Secretariat for months. Further, the report of the Institute's Board of Trustees had not been circulated among delegations. One of the essential duties of the Secretariat was to ensure the timely circulation of documents in order to enable Member States to discuss them and arrive at well-considered conclusions.

79. Mr. HALLIDAY (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) said that many delegations had criticized the focus on one aspect of the future of UNITAR. With respect to the JIU report, he and the Secretariat tended to stress those aspects of the report that supported the view they obviously held: namely, that collaboration between the Institute and the Staff College was a good thing.

80. All United Nations staff was bound by the International Civil Service Commission. His staff had examined the job description of Executive Director of the Institute in a purely technical and apolitical manner and had decided that the post was classifiable at the D-2 level. If the Board of Trustees felt that that decision was unacceptable, it could reconsider the matter, since the final decision lay with the Executive Director or the Chairman of the Board.

81. Mr. OJIMBA (Nigeria) said it was unfortunate that, for many reasons, the recommendations and the report of the UNITAR Board of Trustees had not been distributed to Member States. His delegation did not approve of the secrecy with which the Secretariat had dealt with matters relating to UNITAR.

82. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the report of the Board of Trustees was invariably sent to the Secretary-General, usually together with a brief letter summarizing the salient points. Since UNITAR was an autonomous institution that had been established by the General Assembly, it was only natural to expect that the report of the Board of Trustees should be brought to the attention of Member States, even if only in the form of a summary. If the Committee was to have an informed debate, the Secretariat must circulate all relevant documents in a timely manner.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.